5: Blom & LaFarge A,E-4,5 (1925) 1927 NV9 Tzeltal NV9

CHAPTER XII

THE OCOSINGO VALLEY

The name Ocosingo is Aztec, signifying the "Place of Pines," a name well chosen, for the valley is enclosed in pine-clad hills. When one stands at the southwestern end of the valley it stretches out in front like a huge natural stadium with the high San Martín mountain lying at the back. The northern and southern sides of the valley consist of two parallel rows of mountains, the inner rows being lower than the outer. The interior ranges slope towards the valley and turn nearly vertical cliff walls towards the very narrow valleys that separate them from the exterior mountains (fig. 196).

The interior ranges are broken up in many points, and this the Maya took advantage of, selecting the highest points for pyramids.

The floor of the valley is grass covered, with scattered groups of pine trees. Here and there lie ranches, mostly inhabited by Mexicans, called Ladinos here. The Ladino is, strictly speaking, a man of mixed Indian and Spanish blood, but the Indians use the term to indicate any Mexican or Spaniard who lives in a town or owns a larger ranch. With the name generally goes a certain amount of education, and the ability to read and write.

Ocosingo town now contains only about 500 inhabitants, living in whitewashed brick houses with red tiled roofs. In the center of the town is a Plaza, at one end of which lies the Palacio Municipal, and at the other end a huge Spanish Colonial church. In front of the church is the public fountain; the water and news supply of the town. All day long girls come here to fill large clay jugs with cool water, led down from the San Martín mountain through an underground canal.

Half of the Plaza is planted with trees, which surround a dilapidated music pavilion, without which no self-respecting Mexican village could exist.

The houses that face the Plaza all have colonnades where one may walk in the shade, and where families bring their rocking chairs in the evenings to sit and watch the crowds of as many as twenty-five men and women who walk around the pavilion, or to look at the horses and cows that feed on the grass growing exuberantly between the paving stones of the Plaza.

The Ocosingo Valley and many smaller valleys adjoining formerly supported large herds of cattle and had considerable trade.

[Text continues on p. 247]

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

Chapter 3

New Economic Activities

43 The role of the Indian in the regional and national economy is being
44 shaped more and more by supralocal institutions in public and private en-
177 terprises. The Indians of Tzo?ontahal have mobilized their own resources
178 to incorporate these opportunities. In this they reveal a selective perception of the economic and social advantages of innovation and a tendency to translate form and function into a local idiom. The success of planning at national or regional levels depends upon incorporation of projects at local levels, while the survival of the local group depends upon acceptance of
178 the new opportunities to absorb rising populations.
177 The major institutional settings in which innovation is occurring are
423 (1) the ejido program, (2) employment in agricultural and nonagricul-
464 tural enterprises outside of the community, and (3) economic enterprises
43 originating within the community. My discussion of the economic potential of the local community to adapt to change will be organized in terms of these settings.

The Economic Potential of the Ejido

423

Mexico's ejido program, as one of the oldest and most extensive attempts at land reform in the hemisphere, provides a basis for assessing the economic potential of such programs. Here I shall consider only the effects of ejido administration in the community and what this case illustrates of the potential for development in the future.

Manuel Giraul (quoted in de la Peña 1951:327) summarizes the negative effects of the ejido program:

> In Mexico, the ejido system constitutes an institutionalized block to the reform of the social and economic structure; it corresponds to a

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dies, the owner announces on the loudspeaker of the local bars that he will sell meat at 5 pesos a portion. He preserves the hide to make saddle packs and tumplines. But the loss is great because he will not be able to buy a new bull with what he earns. If the bull lives, he will be better in three weeks and can carry loads. It is a very dangerous operation since the scrotum of a bull is very large. It is easier with a horse.

Surrounding the event with a ceremonial complex minimizes the development of commercialized relations between the caponizer and the owner. Most men who acquire several head of cattle or horses eventually learn to do the task themselves.

Handicrafts performed by men include rope-making from the tails of horses or from plant fibers, and weaving net bags. Most of the men who are assigned to the civil hierarchy spend their spare time in the cabildo making these items.

Carpentry is a skill now being practiced by two Indians of the town who "just learned by watching." They are called upon to help people in constructing the house frame, for which they receive 50 pesos in wages. A Ladino living on the margin of the town is a full-time specialist with his own shop. In addition to supervising house construction, he makes furniture and caskets to order.

New Economic Enterprises

In the operation of the new enterprises, which include cattle raising, cooperative ownership of a store, bars, and trucks, and liquor distilling, several patterns of organization have emerged. Some of these are based on preexisting social groupings, while others represent innovations. The social resources of management, credit operations, and the development of new skills within these local enterprises are of significance in preparing Indians for new occupations in the wider society.

Cattle raising. The most traditional organization is found in the case of cattle raising. Cattle have been in the town at least as far back as the 1915 revolutionary period when informants indicate that most of the

7t Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
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cause of the limited capital involved and the fear of discovery with the expansion of the enterprise. A loose syndicate of distillers provides an insurance protection by raising fines for members who are apprehended by federal agents. Security measures are taken to avoid discovery, and the presence of a federal agent is announced in Tzeltal on the loudspeaker system of one of the bars. One federal agent is on the payroll of the four operating bar owners, who give him 5 pesos a week to avoid legal action on the sale of contraband liquor. Individual distillers pay the tariff of 10 pesos or two liters of liquor a year to the civil officials and to the ejido commission, a tariff justified by the fact that they use wood from communally owned land to cook the sugar. The syndicate is a community-wide organization, mobilized in emergencies only.

The New Social Resources

In the course of operating the new enterprises, knowledge of and experience with supralocal institutions and agents are developing social resources in (1) entrepreneurship, (2) management of capital and credit, (3) knowledge of markets, and (4) dealing with government agencies. In entering into these new economic activities, the Indians have not lost a sense of belonging to the local community. Self-identification as poor, indigenous farmers is both a screen of protection and a means of ensuring continuity with local control systems.

Entrepreneurship. Local entrepreneurs explain their motivation in a rhetoric which emphasizes their interest in community welfare. This validates entering into nontraditional activities, but retaining their position in local society inhibits the expansions of their activities. The case of Santos, the promoter of the trucking cooperative is instructive. Santos had picked up some accounting techniques while he served in the army in Michoacán. He returned to the village because his father walked from Chiapas to Michoacán to tell him he should come back and get married. When he returned, he kept careful account of his costs and returns from the milpa. He realized soon that it wasn't "worth his work" (the Indian has not as yet learned the idiom or the value system which goes into the

might have been his father, an uncle, or a godparent who had already served as alférez. 794 782

Buying festal foods. *The following items were purchased in the neighboring Ladino town of Himlol: 120 pesos' worth of bread; one-half a slaughtered bull for 600 pesos; 6 almudes of beans; 10 kilos of coffee; and 5 pesos' worth of brown sugar. If the alférez owned a bull, he slaughtered it and sold one half.* 794 796 [43]

Preparing liquor. *The alférez rented a still and, with the help of his father and brothers, distilled 7 garafones (126 liters) of liquor, using brown cane sugar.* [273] [429]

Preparing special clothing. *The following items were purchased or bought: jacket for 50 pesos; shirt for 55 pesos; hat for 30 pesos; pair of boots for 32 pesos; red waistband for 16 pesos; and red kerchief for 9 pesos.* 794 796 43 [291]

The hat was made by a man in the town. When the alférez went to ask him to do him the favor of making a hat, he brought 1 peso's worth of bread, 1 liter of trago, and 40 cents' worth of chocolate. The alférez borrowed black leather leggings and a black towel. To each of those who lent him clothing, he gave 1 liter of trago, 1 peso's worth of bread, and 40 cents' worth of chocolate. When he returned the clothing, he gave the same gifts. [426]

The installation of the new alférez. *During the four days of the fiesta of the saint with which he was charged, the new alférez was initiated into his duties in office. In taking on each of the functions assigned to him, that "dialectical connection between the actor and his part, the person and his roles or status or office," was effected (Fortes 1959:57).* 794 796

The first day (Paswamal). *On the first day of every large fiesta,* Paswamal *(literally, "to make the boughs or decorations"), the women of the household and the sisters and sisters-in-law of the new alférez and his wife gathered in his house to cook the food. The men slaughtered the* [252] [262]

8: Hunt E-4,5 (1958)1962 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango
Aguacatenango

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS

42 43 182 571 184 241 323 434 We can safely arrive at the conclusion that some aspects of the economic system play a very important part in the structuring of social relations in the Chiapas communities. The economic factors which are indicated by the natives themselves and have been assessed by us as being crucial correlates of certain patterns of social behavior are:

(1) The unspecialized agricultural system of one village (Aguacatenango) versus the system of agriculture plus pottery production in the other makes the second one a "richer" town with less wealth fluctuation from year to year.

184 182 462 592 562 434 (2) The relative importance of women as bread-winners and producers in the traditional division of labor in one village (Amatenango), results in the fact that labor of women is crucial for the continuity of the domestic group, whereas in Aguacatenango, it is not. This does not mean that Aguacatenango women do not work. It just means that women's work in Aguacatenango, however exhausting, does not have a market in which it can be sold, and it cannot be transformed into subsistence goods or into money, i.e., it has an undeterminate marginal value. This gives the women in one village (Amatenango) economic independence and a higher status